

# MARWIC

## T · I · M · E · S

MID-ATLANTIC REGION SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, AND CHILDREN

### PENNSYLVANIA'S COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM OF LANCASTER COUNTY'S WIC PROGRAM CELEBRATES THE KICK-OFF OF THEIR NEW MOBILE CLINIC

By Natalie Oster, Outreach Coordinator

On November 6, Pennsylvania's Community Action Program (CAP) of Lancaster County WIC Program celebrated the official kick-off of its new mobile clinic, WIC on Wheels (WOW) with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. WOW is the latest outreach initiative in providing WIC services to underserved rural communities in Lancaster County where transportation to more traditional WIC offices is a barrier.

Lancaster County WIC was honored to host several special guests and speakers during the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The USDA, PA Department of Health, PA state representatives, Lancaster County Commissioners and community partners were among the guests that came to

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**CUTTING THE RIBBON** — Pictured (left to right) are Denis Stuckey, Lancaster County Commissioner; Greg Paulson, Chief of Staff for State Representative Mike Sturla; Kelly Mannherz, WIC Nutritionist, MARO; Kim Sullenberger, CAP of Lancaster County WIC Director; David Zimmerman, State Representative; Dan Jurman, CEO, CAP of Lancaster County; Mike McKenna, COO, CAP of Lancaster County; and Georgette Dukes McAllister, CEO, Welsh Mountain Health Centers.

### WEST VIRGINIA'S RANDOLPH ELKINS HONORS WIC MOM WHO CREDITS BREASTFEEDING WITH BABY'S RECOVERY

By Trish Halterman, MS, RD, Nutritionist, Breastfeeding Coordinator

Alicia Thacker, a mother participating in WIC in Buckhannon, West Virginia, believes in the benefits of breast milk. Her daughter, Avery, continued to exclusively breastfeed even during the medical complications that threatened her life. As a matter of fact, Alicia feels that breastfeeding helped Avery have a faster recovery time.

Avery was born October 4, 2014 with biliary atresia. Biliary atresia is a life-threatening liver condition in which the bile ducts do not have openings. Bile can build up and cause liver damage in the infant. A liver transplant is the only treatment.

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**BELIEVING IN THE BENEFITS OF BREAST MILK** — Alicia Thacker, Avery, and sisters Graci and Rylee.

### SPRING 2016

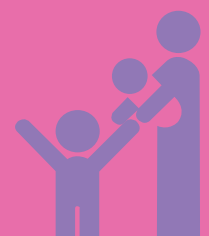
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## HEART HEALTH MONTH AT DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WIC'S CHILDREN'S NATIONAL MEDICAL SYSTEM

By Kimberly Thompson, MS, RDN, LD

For the month of February, the WIC Program at Children's National Health System in Washington, DC, celebrated National Heart Month. The month-long event was led by WIC staff that included Nutritionists Kimberly Thompson MS, RDN, LD and Amelia Maguire RDN, LD, as well as Clinical Technicians Toni Henderson-Jones and Courtney Monroe at the Sheikh-Zayed Campus.

The WIC staff encouraged clients to commit to a healthier lifestyle and promoted small changes to lead to a lifetime of heart health. The clinic encouraged families to schedule appointments with their doctors to discuss heart health, add exercise to daily routines, increase healthy eating, and take steps to quit smoking. Furthermore, the WIC Program promoted new WIC food items such as low-fat and nonfat yogurt, to participating families and how to use yogurt as a heart health substitute for sour cream or mayonnaise.

The event was a great success and the local WIC Program looks forward to continuing monthly celebrations that promote a healthier lifestyle within the District of Columbia. ■



**TAKE THE MESSAGE TO HEART** — This colorful bulletin board educated WIC participants on lifestyle changes for a healthy heart.



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## “FIX IT AND FORGET IT” NUTRITION EDUCATION AT WEST VIRGINIA’S RANDOLPH ELKINS HEALTH DEPARTMENT

By Trish Halterman, RD, Randolph Elkins Local WIC Agency Nutritionist

West Virginia’s Randolph Elkins WIC Agency is sponsoring a year-long crock pot cooking nutrition education promotion. WIC staff is preparing and testing recipes in each clinic with one recipe per month distributed during individual and group nutrition counseling sessions.

To expand the classroom into the home kitchen, all WIC participants completing nutrition education are being entered into monthly drawings for a crock pot.

“With busy lives, and not a lot of time to cook, we would like to assist WIC families in learning to use a crock pot for meal preparation,” said Cindy Haney, Nutrition Education Liaison with Randolph Elkins Health Department WIC Program. “We hope to help families maximize their food dollars, choose healthy ingredients and eat more whole foods overall. The recipes are tasty, easy to prepare and seem to be very popular. We are thrilled that the promotion appears to be a success!”

Crock pot winners have been very pleased with the prize and WIC staff members are enjoying the taste-testing as well as the fellowship of a meal together in the office. ■



**WINNER, WINNER, CROCK POT DINNER** — Petersburg office assistant Gina Hinkle (left) presents a Hamilton Beach crock pot to “Fix It and Forget It” December drawing winner Melinda Mallow and her son, Isaac.



By Jennifer Nagy, RD, MPH, USDA Program Specialist

The WIC staff at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) hosted its FY 2016 State WIC Directors' Meeting in Philadelphia on November 17-18, 2015. The two-day event included presentations from USDA regional and national staff, State Agency sharing sessions, and interactive round table discussions.

The meeting was opened by Jaime Van Lieu, MARO WIC Branch Chief, who welcomed all to the first State Directors' Meeting held off-site from the MARO headquarters in Robbinsville, NJ in many years. Jim Harmon, Division Director, Special Nutrition Programs, was also in attendance and provided updates on FNS programs including the Summer Food Service Program and Farm to School initiatives. Jim emphasized the importance of program integrity and how this continues to be a focus area for all USDA programs.

USDA regional staff provided a variety of informative presentations over the two-day meeting. These included an overview of the FY 2016 USDA strategic priorities, updates in the areas of Program Review and Monitoring, Certification and Eligibility, Participant Integrity, Vendor Management, Nutrition Services, Operational Adjustment (OA) Funding, Civil Rights and Information Systems and EBT. In addition, staff from the MARO Financial Management (FM) Department provided a review of procurement processes and the use of data analytics in monitoring program operations. The FM staff presented individual and creative awards to all of the State agencies to recognize their performance throughout the year.

Presentations from the USDA National Office included Hayes Brown, Chief of the Funding, Reporting and Analysis Branch, who provided an update on funding and participation from a national perspective, and Allison Magness, Acting Branch Chief of the Special Nutrition Evaluation Branch, who shared an overview of research conducted on the WIC Program in the areas of infant feeding practices and breastfeeding.

MARO State Agency staff also shared many innovative and best practices throughout the meeting. These included creative outreach initiatives and nutrition education materials, collaborative partnerships, use of technology and EBT data to offer improved participant services and to help monitor, detect and sanction fraudulent activity, effective training ideas and staff recognition through performance awards. An interactive round table discussion on childhood retention was also conducted allowing attendees an opportunity to share and brainstorm ideas to increase and maintain participation of children in the WIC Program.

All in all, the FY 2016 WIC State Directors' Meeting was a great success and provided a wonderful opportunity for USDA and State staff to meet and plan for the new fiscal year. The MARO staff is very appreciative of the State staff's participation and all their hard work and effort to serve WIC families every day. ■

**WV Randolph Elkins** continued from page 1

Avery underwent a liver transplant from a family donor in May of 2015. Her expected hospital stay following surgery was projected to be eight weeks, but Avery was home and doing well after just five weeks. Alicia continued to fully breastfeed Avery through the transplant process as well as her recovery. Even though the medical team admits it is rare to have a mom fully breastfeed through the entire process, they attribute it as a reason Avery did not require a feeding tube – ultimately shortening her hospital stay.

Even though Avery continues regular follow-up with Pittsburgh Children's Hospital, her bloodwork has remained stable, and she is doing well. Alicia is convinced breastfeeding is the reason for Avery's complication-free recovery.

Alicia and Avery were recognized by the Randolph-Elkins Health Department WIC Program during World Breastfeeding Week. The family, and Avery's story, were highlighted on the local television station WBOY-TV. The local WIC agency invited the television station to recognize Alicia for outstanding promotion of breastfeeding for the local community and to give notice to Avery's astounding story. Lastly the Randolph-Elkins Health Department WIC Program presented WBOY-TV with a certificate of appreciation for their support. View the story at <http://www.wboy.com/story/29699135/world-breastfeeding-week>. ■

## WEST VIRGINIA'S SHENANDOAH COMMUNITY HEALTH WIC PROGRAM MAKING ITS MARK AS KID-FRIENDLY

By Lauren Korzep, Nutritionist and Outreach Coordinator

West Virginia parents living in the five counties of the eastern panhandle are now enjoying child-friendly WIC clinics thanks to a recent focus of providing nutrition-based, interactive play areas.

The Shenandoah Community Health WIC Program has installed a kitchen playset and interactive toys in each nutritionist office. The clinics have also incorporated more colorful décor with the goal of having a kid-friendly environment which provides the entertainment and education needed to give participants, including children, an enjoyable experience.

"Overall, the offices are more inviting and create a more relaxing atmosphere," said Lauren Korzep, a nutritionist and outreach coordinator at the Martinsburg WIC clinic. "The kitchen playsets are especially helpful in counseling. For example, one of the best ways to encourage a picky toddler to try a new food is to introduce it first through play or by helping parents cook in the kitchen. Often, kids may be exposed to a new fruit or vegetable through the kitchen playset in the WIC nutritionist office."

The wide variety of fruit and vegetable play food sparks imaginative, developmental play for children, but also helps to encourage parents to offer a variety of foods, facilitates the nutrition education process, and allows informal, non-threatening assessment of food insecurity and other possible family needs. Korzep highlights, "While children are playing with fake asparagus, parents casually offer, 'We haven't tried asparagus yet; I'm not sure on how to prepare it,' which presents the opportunity for WIC staff to easily implement Value Enhanced Nutrition Assessment techniques and tools. Likewise, when parents observe their small child playing in the play kitchen some are amazed that their small child can use a small open cup or can pretend to chop, pour, and stir foods efficiently."

During 2016, child retention is a focal point of outreach. When creating a more kid-friendly, relaxing atmosphere, the Shenandoah Community Health WIC Program has the intent to let the community know right away the clinic welcomes children until their fifth birthday. The sharing of this information and caring interaction with children and their parents will help the Shenandoah Community Health WIC Program position itself as a child-friendly provider that strives to be a trusted public health program. ■



*FUN IN THE KITCHEN — WIC participants use the play kitchen while learning about new foods and good nutrition.*

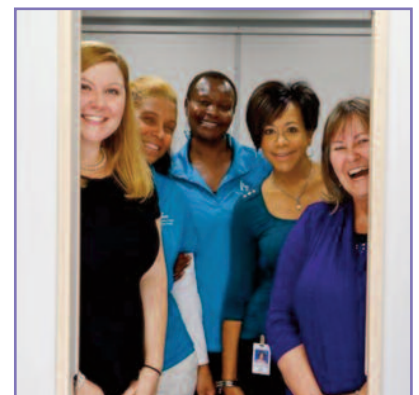
### **PA's Community Action** *continued from page 1*

participate in the celebration. Georgette Dukes McAllister, CEO, Welsh Mountain Health Centers and WIC partner opened the ceremony with remarks on the need for WIC services in rural communities. She was followed by Pennsylvania State Representative, David H. Zimmerman, and Greg Paulson, Chief of Staff for Representative Mike Sturla. Kelly Mannherz, WIC Nutritionist for the USDA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, spoke about the proven statistics on the long-term benefits and effects WIC has on families. Kelly was followed by keynote speaker Dan Jurman, CEO of CAP, and closing remarks from CAP WIC Program Director Kim Sullenberger.

CAP of Lancaster County's WIC Program currently serves more than 9,000 individuals in four regional clinics which include Lancaster City, Ephrata, Columbia, and Quarryville. "We know there are more families in Lancaster County who could benefit from our program and WOW gives us the opportunity to reach these families," said Natalie Oster, WIC Outreach Coordinator.

WOW will make weekly stops in Gap/Paradise, New Holland, Manheim, and Elizabethtown providing all the services found in a WIC clinic. "We chose these areas because we know there are eligible families who need our services and can't get to our current locations. We aim to be partners for busy parents and caregivers. WOW helps make the WIC experience convenient and accessible," said WIC Director Kim Sullenberger.

A WIC nutritionist and office manager will be on board to provide free health screenings, healthy food vouchers, nutrition education and tips, breastfeeding support and referrals to other services for WIC participants. The 24-foot-long mobile clinic is equipped with everything needed to complete a WIC visit. ■



*TAKING A PEEK INSIDE — Pictured (left to right) are Kelly Mannherz, WIC Nutritionist, MARO; Denise Acevedo, WOW Office Manager; Paustine Ronoh, WOW Nutritionist; Lissette Cortes, PA Department of Health Regional Manager; and Bonnie Mellott, PA Department of Health Public Health Program Administrator.*



## NEW JERSEY'S ST. JOSEPH'S WIC HOSTS SUPER BOWL FUN DAY 2016

By Nicole Muzones, WIC Nutritionist and Josephine Valenzuela, WIC Nutritionist

On January 29, in honor of Super Bowl 50, New Jersey's St. Joseph's WIC Program hosted a health fair called "WIC Super Bowl Fun Day," in which parents and children were invited to partake in football-themed games and activities, try nutritious party snacks, and get their faces painted for our "Be a Football Player" photo booth. The halls were decorated with streamers, banners, and footballs and the staff was dressed in their favorite football teams' jerseys. Food demos allowed clients to taste and learn easy-to-prepare recipes for nutritious party snacks using WIC-approved foods. Children and parents enjoyed the opportunity to be physically active in games such as Hopscotch, Field Goal Toss, and Inflatable Ring Toss, where children bounced

on the numbers of a hopscotch game, tossed discs into a miniature football goal post, and pitched inflatable rings onto orange cones. Enthusiastic parents were taking pictures of their children's smiling faces as they posed through our "Be a Football Player" photo booth and they got their faces painted with Super Bowl-themed designs.

Families left the office with smiles on their decorated faces and prizes in their hands. Parents were excited and wished we could have events like these every day. Our WIC Program was happy to share valuable time with our participants and their families and look forward to hosting more events in the future. ■



FACEPAINTING — Nutritionist Josephine Valenzuela face painting on a child's face.



FIELD GOAL TOSS — Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Catherine Conception and WIC mom cheering on child at Football Disc Toss.



TEAM PHOTO — St. Joseph's WIC Staff



## CHILDREN'S HOME SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY'S WIC LAUNCHES "INFANT AT WORK" POLICY

By Victoria Fredrick, Senior Breastfeeding Peer Counselor

In January, The Children's Home Society of NJ's (CHS) WIC Program became the first WIC agency in the State of New Jersey to have an Infant at Work Policy for its peer counselors. This policy is just one more step in the CHS's commitment to giving the Mercer WIC Program all the tools necessary to increase breastfeeding rates and retain peer counselors. In some areas where breastfeeding rates are low, some women have never seen a baby being breastfed. This policy will directly impact the ability of peer counselors to role model breastfeeding. Already two peer counselors employed by the CHS Mercer WIC Program are bringing their infants to work.



*Peer counselors with their Infants at work*

This innovative policy was the brainchild of Breastfeeding Manager Jeanine Hearne-Barsamian, and Program Administrator Joan O. Martin. The historic policy was voted in by the sponsoring Agency, The Children's Home Society of New Jersey's Board of Directors, after reviewing startling statistics collected by the Breastfeeding Unit and presented by the Director of Maternal/Child Health Family and Community Support Services, Maritza Raimundi-Petroski. She oversees the WIC Program, among other Maternal Child Programs, and passionately supported the inception of the Infant at Work policy for the agency.

The CHS Board and the executive team were delighted to hear of the positive impact that peer counselors could have on the community by modeling breastfeeding in the WIC office. This information was validation of how to avoid high turnover rates and the costs associated with trying to replace a peer counselor who is unable to find reliable childcare, which are estimated by Parenting in the Workplace Institute to be between 90% and 200% of an employee's salary.

The Infant at Work policy stipulated that a peer counselor may bring her breastfeeding, non-crawling infant to work until six months of age. This policy mirrors in part Washington State's Infant Policy by allowing an employee to use a colleague as a voluntary care provider for short periods of time throughout the day when work tasks may be unsuitable for an infant. While this policy does not negate the need for a peer counselor to find alternate arrangements when an infant is sick, it does create a wonderful atmosphere for healthy moms and infants. ■

## USDA GOES PINK FOR BREAST CANCER

By Kelly Mannherz, MS, IBCLC, USDA Nutritionist

USDA staff at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office dressed in pink on October 20, 2015 to raise awareness about breast cancer. The Go Pink event started with a quiz to assess the group's knowledge of breast cancer and various pink prizes were awarded for correct responses. Next, a USDA employee and breast cancer survivor shared her personal experience with being diagnosed with breast cancer and undergoing treatments and surgery. Her journey on the road to recovery was truly inspirational, and she is now a breast cancer prevention advocate.

To emphasize the importance of exercise and maintaining a healthy weight to prevent cancer, the staff then took a group walk outside. The event concluded with some refreshing pink lemonade and nutritious snacks, and brochures outlining the risk factors for breast cancer, talking with your doctor, and prevention tips were distributed.



*MARO GOES PINK — The USDA MARO staff shows support for an employee who is a breast cancer survivor.*

## NEW JERSEY'S NEWARK WIC CELEBRATES "THE GIFT OF LOVE, BREASTFEEDING"

Newark, NJ's William Street WIC location added a Valentine's Day theme to their monthly Breastfeeding Support Group. Prenatal and breastfeeding mothers gathered for support, education, and food, as well as to celebrate the gift of breastmilk for their baby Valentines.

The group discussed breastfeeding after an educational video followed by a Q&A session.

About 18 moms and their babies attended the event, and many of them were engaged in the conversation and asked great questions about many aspects of breastfeeding. All had fun, and enjoyed the camaraderie and celebration.

Nicole French of Acelleron Medical Products, a durable medical equipment supplier, shared her knowledge about

various breast pumps and answered questions regarding insurance coverage and the process to obtain a breast pump. Ms. French, a strong breastfeeding advocate, who regularly attends Newark WIC support group meetings, brought lovely snacks for the moms to enjoy.

Senior breastfeeding peer counselors Renee Suppa and Jennifer Aguilera assisted with client invitations, event check-in, set up, and a raffle, as well as translation for Spanish-speaking moms. ■



*THE GIFT OF LOVE — Newark, NJ WIC staff (left to right) Nutritionists Kinces Joseph and Ngozi-Njoku-Obi; BFPC, Renee Suppa and Jennifer Aguilera; Supervisory Dietitian Cristina Santos; WIC Coordinator Patricia Cummings and Lactation Consultant Sharon Schopfer celebrated Valentine's Day the WIC way!*



## PENNSYLVANIA'S SHENANGO VALLEY URBAN LEAGUE, INC. WIC CREATIVELY SUPPORTS BREASTFEEDING MOMS

By Doreen Scarmack, CPA/BFC-PCM, Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc.

### Peer Counselor Breastfeeding Café

Pennsylvania's Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. WIC Program has instituted the "Peer Counselor Breastfeeding Café." In our community there is very little support for breastfeeding women. LaLeche Leagues or Breastfeeding Coalitions are non-existent in the three counties that we serve. The café is an initiative to fulfill this void and bring breastfeeding women together.

The goal of the café is to provide support and education to both breastfeeding and pregnant women to help increase the initiation and duration of breastfeeding in our counties.

Our objective is to provide support and encouragement in a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where clients feel comfortable sharing concerns and questions. The café is a place where moms can support each other and forge friendships with other breastfeeding women.

During the operating hours of the café, moms enjoy snacks in a French style café while benefiting from the knowledge and experience of the peer counselors.

Eventually, classes on healthy foods for lactation will be added to the project.



GETTING TOGETHER — WIC moms enjoying the Breastfeeding Café in action.



MOMS ENJOYING THE CAFÉ — WIC moms Danielle Clemente (left) and Stephanie Dunder with their children.

### Blankets for Breastfeeding Babies

The Shenango Valley Urban League, Inc. WIC is fortunate to be receiving blankets, sweaters, and hats from the "Bundle Babies" project at Grace Chapel Community Church without cost to us. The ladies of this group create many beautiful items and WIC staff is very grateful to be able to provide these special gifts to our breastfeeding moms. ■



HANDMADE FROM THE HEART — Showing off the beautiful handmade gifts are (left to right) Lori Kocholek, PC; Doreen Scarmack, CPA/BFC-PCM; Elizabeth Lampkins, WIC Director; Mandy Marsh, LPN/PC-OM; (sitting) Linda Zeronas, who is the leader of the group that makes the blankets.



## MARYLAND AND PENNSYLVANIA WIC ADMINISTRATORS ATTEND “A CONVERSATION ABOUT HUNGER”

Next time you're walking in a crowded mall or attending a sporting event, concert or other venue with lots of folks, start counting the people around you. Every time you get to the seventh person, think about that individual as someone who is from a family that has experienced or is currently experiencing food insecurity because in the US — the wealthiest country in the world — one out of every seven families suffers from the impacts of hunger. This translates into over 15 million children! And in rural areas, the concentration of children who are affected by hunger is even higher with one out of four children living in poverty.

Recently, Shirley Sword, from Pennsylvania WIC, and Jackie Marlette-Boras, from Maryland WIC, had the opportunity to attend a meeting in Washington, DC, entitled, “A White House Conversation on Child Hunger in America,” where policy makers came together with experts in the fields of public health, sociology, economics, education, nutrition and medicine to discuss the impacts of hunger on children, families, and the nation as a whole.

Not surprisingly, the impacts of poverty and hunger are staggering. The more well-known effects of hunger include undernourished mothers who deliver babies born at a lower than optimal weight with a higher incidence of chronic disease later in life. Persistent hunger during childhood affects the ability to focus in school, resulting in a negative impact on both the academic and behavioral demands of education. Many of these children end up dropping out of school which lowers their potential to work their way out of the poverty that they were born into. Adults who experience chronic hunger are more likely to be hospitalized because of the inability to prevent the onset of infections due to poor nutrition or to eat enough calories to meet the needs of chronic diseases such as diabetes.

In addition to the professional panel at the meeting who laid out the research facts about hunger, one individual – Dawn — taught us all the true impact of hunger by bravely sharing her story. Dawn was a woman, probably in her late 40s to early 50s, who looked just like any one of us or our neighbors. Six years ago — a single mom with a teenage son — she was employed in an attorney's office, but due to a downturn in the economy, she was laid off. At the time, the unemployment rate in her state was 8.8% (more than double the current unemployment rate in that state); hence, she was not able to find a new position. She stopped going to her medical appointments for treatment of her diabetes because she had to choose between health care and food. Eventually,



*GETTING THE PULSE ON HUNGER — Shirley Sword, Nutrition Services Section Chief for PA WIC and Jackie Marlette-Boras, MD WIC Director at “A White House Conversation on Child Hunger in America.”*

in order to survive, she had to apply for food assistance. She first went to a food pantry and then, after sitting in her car crying for an hour outside the social services office, she went inside to apply for food stamps. She was so relieved and grateful to be treated with respect and understanding by the person who processed her case. But not everyone was as supportive as that case worker. Dawn relayed the harassment that she experienced from other shoppers while using this lifeline that provided her with approximately \$10.50 a day to feed herself and her son. She started shopping late at night to avoid the humiliation of being treated badly by others at the store. Eventually, she did get another position and was able to get back on her feet. But the emotional toll of that experience is hard to forget.

Programs like WIC and SNAP address some of the needs of the families we serve, but these programs are not enough to make up for the constant stress that families endure when they are not sure if they will have enough food to make it until their next benefit is available. However, we can augment the benefits of these programs by providing emotional support to someone who might seem unhappy, distracted or openly unpleasant when they show up at our clinics. Maybe it took an hour of crying before they were able to bring themselves to ask for help. But maybe a WIC staff person can be the one who helps build the confidence that someone needs to help themselves get to a better place in life. ■

The deadline for the Summer issue of MARWIC TIMES is May 9, 2016. Submit articles, photos/captions and calendar events to your State editor. No Polaroid pictures. 5" x 7" digital photos (saved as JPGs) preferred.

All photographs must include a detailed caption.

## VIRGINIA'S RICHMOND CITY WIC SUPPORTS BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS WITH NEW MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Last August, Richmond City WIC and the Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) coordinators joined the Richmond Health Action Alliance to launch #RVABreastfeeds, a social media campaign to raise community support for breastfeeding mothers during World Breastfeeding Week.

In a survey of African-American first-time mothers who were recipients of Richmond City WIC and whose infants were born from 2010 to 2013, 55% initiated breastfeeding and only 14% breastfed did so at six months. Mothers encounter multiple obstacles when they attempt to reach the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation of exclusive breastfeeding for six months. Such obstacles include not enough opportunities to network with breastfeeding mothers, lack of up-to-date and culturally relevant instruction and information from health care professionals, limited accommodation to breastfeed or express milk in public or at the workplace, and inadequate paid maternity leave.

The #RVABreastfeeds campaign placed life-sized cutouts of culturally diverse breastfeeding women in more than 30 businesses, non-profits and healthcare organizations across the city to normalize breastfeeding in public spaces. With the cutouts, volunteers engaged a wide variety of citizens, stakeholders and business owners in a dialogue about their role in creating supportive environments for breastfeeding in Richmond City. Other campaign components included community leaders serving as "Breastfeeding Champions," the dissemination of breastfeeding facts and local resources in English and Spanish, and peer-to-peer support in the form of tips for expectant and breastfeeding mothers on various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

During World Breastfeeding Week, #RVABreastfeeds received 100,000 unique engagements on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as well as three local television segments. This media presence created a space to begin a community discussion on breastfeeding. Volunteers with each cut-out also engaged hundreds of Richmond City residents in more than 30 locations and distributed 1,700 pieces of literature with breastfeeding facts and resources including WIC eligibility requirements and services. Conversations with citizens provided feedback on how to shape messaging in future initiatives. The collaborative campaign also strengthened partnerships between Richmond City WIC and the Richmond Health Action Alliance, building a foundation for future collaboration to improve breastfeeding rates and awareness in Richmond City.

This year Richmond City WIC and the Richmond Health Action Alliance will conduct outreach to businesses to provide an update on the law passed last July which protects breastfeeding mothers' right to breastfeed in public. "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" stickers will be distributed to business allies. The breastfeeding cut-outs will also be available for check-out to community- and faith-based organizations, health fairs, etc. to continue the conversation. #RVABreastfeeds created a website to share breastfeeding resources and tools that will continue to be built out in English and Spanish. Passionate community members and leaders who learned about the campaign will also be invited to serve on the coalition to help plan for this year's World Breastfeeding Week. Learn more about the campaign at [www.rvabreastfeeds.com](http://www.rvabreastfeeds.com). ■



*COME ON IN — Kathleen Bell, Director of Nursing and Operations at CrossOver Healthcare Ministry, proudly displays a "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" sticker at their South Side clinic in Richmond City, Virginia.*



*BREAST IS STILL BEST — Ann Marie Edmonds, a former breastfeeding mother and proud grandmother, shows her support for breastfeeding at Kroger during World Breastfeeding Week. Kroger was one of 30 locations around the city that hosted a cut-out during the week.*



## PUERTO RICO WIC PROGRAM ACTION PLAN FOR THE ZIKA VIRUS PREVENTION

By Rayna Hichez Coste, LND

**T**he Puerto Rico WIC Program has 92 clinics Island wide, with approximately 14,514 pregnant participants as of February 10, 2016.

As most people know, we are in a national alert for the recent Zika virus outbreak. In December 2015, Puerto Rico reported its first case. As of mid-February, the PR Health Department had confirmed 22 cases of individuals with the Zika virus. Sadly, among these confirmed cases, there was a pregnant woman within her first trimester.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Zika virus can be transmitted from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. Other available data report birth defects and other poor pregnancy outcomes in babies of mothers who were infected with the Zika virus. Until more is known, the CDC recommends special precautions for one of the groups the WIC Program serves, the pregnant participants.

Dana Miró, Executive Director of PR WIC Program, in conjunction with the PR Health Department Action Plan for the Zika virus, offered training to more than 150 WIC Program staff. This training was available to all nutrition supervisors and breastfeeding peer counselors from all clinics and regions, including personnel from headquarters office. The all-day training was held in February at the “Teatro Ambassador,” Santurce, PR.

Education sessions were provided from three different resources. Dr. Julio Cádiz, speaking on behalf of State Epidemiologist Dr. Brenda Rivera, talked about “The Zika Virus: Evolution, Detecting its Signs and Symptoms, and Preventive Measures of the Virus.” Dr. Miguel Valencia, Director from the Division of Children with Special Medical Needs, offered a presentation titled “Congenital Disorder: Microcephaly.” Dr. Johnny Rullán, Epidemiologist from the private sector in charge of the Zika virus campaign in PR, presented the Puerto Rico Government’s Action Plan.

On the other hand, the activity gave the opportunity to reinforce our nutritionists on the importance of documentation. Blanca Sastre, Supervisor II from the Nutrition and Breastfeeding Division and Vilma Ortiz Santiago, Supervisor II from the Policies and Procedures Division, reviewed with our staff the codes of Nutrition Risk Criteria, which may be directly associated with the Zika virus. Among them: 152 Low Head Circumference, 348 Central Nervous System Disorders, 349 Genetic and Congenital Disorders, and 351 Inborn Errors of Metabolism were identified.

Each clinic Supervisor was handed a list of all the pregnant participants in his or her clinic, while all Region Supervisors were provided all lists from the clinics she keeps track of. Nutritionists were required to maintain a daily record of pregnant participants being oriented on the preventive measures of the Zika virus and the materials provided.

Among the educational materials that will be handed to participants are: Sick with Chinkungunya, Dengue y Zika Zika virus: What you need to know, Questions and Answers: Zika virus infection and pregnancy, Possible association between Zika virus and Microcephaly, Data on Microcephaly, Questions and Answers for Healthcare Providers Caring for Pregnant Woman and the Zika virus infection, Mosquito bites prevention, Help control mosquitoes that transmit the Dengue, Chinkungunya and Zika virus.

After all resources educated our present staff, Mrs. Miró, shared the last instructions received from “Fortaleza” and the Department of Health after meeting with CDC personnel. With that said, Region Supervisors were given space to meet up with their Region Nutritionists and Breastfeeding Peer Counselors to set a plan of action for their region. At the end, each clinic supervisor was provided a package of



*PLAN OF ATTACK — WIC from around the island gathered to hear the Puerto Rico WIC action plan concerning Zika virus protection.*

samples of mosquito repellents and prophylactics to be distributed among pregnant participants within their clinics, to educate them on the preventive measures for the Zika virus. ■

## DELAWARE WIC LAUNCHES THE myWIC CLIENT PORTAL

By Maria Shroyer

Existing or future WIC participants can check eligibility status or request to schedule an appointment at any time of day through the new myWIC client portal. Delaware WIC is one of the first in the country to have a client portal. The portal was launched last September. An explanatory video, brochure and pen giveaway promoted and educated on the procedure.

The portal is accessed through the Delaware WIC website, [de.gov/wic](http://de.gov/wic). There is also an original video made at Delaware WIC that explains the procedures of how to navigate the portal.

Once on the portal, clients enter key information such as address, income, and category, in order to assess eligibility and request an appointment. Existing clients may create an account and request for their existing appointment to be rescheduled. The portal and the Delaware WIC WOW (WIC on the Web) database are linked so that only available appointments are shown. The portal was developed by the WOW vendor, Three Sigma of Maryland.

In clinic, a staff member checks the client portal appointment requests at the end of the day and confirms if the request is in agreement with the clinic schedule. A confirmation email is sent which confirms the appointment.

Since September, there have been 429 appointment requests through the portal, with more increasing each month! ■



*SCREEN SHOT — Once you log into the Delaware WIC website, it's easy to schedule an appointment.*



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